

OUR CORRESPONDENCE.

LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

Sir,—The following course of lectures was delivered some years since at an Institution wherein the audience was composed of ladies and gentlemen; the language, therefore, was adapted for general comprehension, for which reason, it is hoped that due allowance will be made when the matter appears hardly of sufficient importance for admission into a periodical like *THE BUILDER*; but some of your readers will probably be able to appreciate the labour of the task implied in having to re-write a long composition. Such as they are, with additional notes, the lectures are submitted, in the hope that in some of your general readers they may arouse a spirit of inquiry on the subject of antiquities, or refresh their pleasing recollections of the glories of by-gone days. G. R. F.

INTRODUCTION.

The object of the present course of lectures upon architecture will be an endeavour to render that science more familiar, and therefore, it is hoped, more instructive, than is generally attempted in works which are too often intelligible only to the professional student, to whom the technical details are indeed useful and necessary and of the greatest value, but from which the general reader derives little information or amusement. The consequence is that an acquaintance with this science has been closed against nearly all but its professors, for the little knowledge that the public have of it is to be attributed, not to an indifference on their part to learn, but to the uninviting form in which the subject has been presented to their notice. If this science was abstruse, if its operations were confined within a very limited range, and if its results were only partially seen, we might then consider it a work of supererogation to descend upon its importance, or enlarge upon its merits. But when we know that monuments of architecture are found in almost every country on the face of the globe; that these remains are connected with the history of the world from its earliest periods, often serving as the landmarks of chronology; when we find that our comforts (to say nothing of our luxuries) depend in a very great degree upon the application of architecture to the construction of our dwellings, it is not assuming too much to believe that an examination of the principles of the science, of its rise and progress, of its intimate connection with the welfare of different countries, may be considered a profitable inquiry.

The first objects which engage the observation of the traveller (after the unrivalled works of nature) are the antiquities of the various countries through which he passes; and these have been found, to arrest the notice not only of the virtuoso, the scholar, and the artist, but (passing as the glance may be) even of the careless votary of pleasure, who, hurrying on from place to place with heedless rapidity, would yet be ashamed to confess on his return that he had not seen the celebrated memorials of antiquity which were scattered in his route.

If, then, these relics of by-gone days have always excited so much attention in succeeding ages, if Time, instead of lessening, has increased the charm with which they are invested, it will not be deemed a fruitless task to attain some knowledge of the general relations which they bear to each other, more particularly as the inquiry may be the means of enabling us to look upon such objects not merely as masses of stone and marble, without meaning or design, but as memorials of departed greatness, as models of art, as specimens of man's industry, of his genius, of his skill; thus shall we see beauty developed, and taste displayed, where before, to the unenlightened eye, all appeared a shapeless mass of deformity, or an assemblage of confused and unmeaning features.

Architecture as a science is undeniably more useful than its sister arts, Painting and Sculpture; for whereas the two latter may be termed the arts of luxury, the first must be admitted to have its origin from necessity; and without wishing to assign to it an undue superiority, one point in its favour over the other arts is this, that it appeals entirely to the judgment, whilst the others appeal to the senses; to value one taste is required; passion is wanted for the others; and this is the reason that painting and sculpture are more appreciated than architecture.

The day-dreams of the poet are not more delightful than the waking thoughts of the antiquary; the splendid fictions of the former are to the latter not less splendid realities, and when he conjures up before his mind the unrivalled monuments of former ages, he thinks too of the mighty men who reared them; the contemplation of the sculptures and paintings which adorned their temples is associated with that dazzling but erring system of mythology whose heroes, real or fabulous, have been

familiar to us from our very childhood, whose deeds have been immortalised by the poet's pen, and who live again before us in the almost-breathing marbles sculptured by the master-hand of Phidias, in the possession of which this country may be justly proud. As the poet's fancy is as free as the air he breathes, heeding neither time nor space, so does the imagination of the antiquary range on never-tiring wing over the whole habitable surface of the globe—wherever man has his dwelling-place, there are to him objects of interest; he speculates on the gradual progress of architecture, from the hut to the palace, from the cave to the temple; every structure he sees opens to him a subject for investigation, no country is unvisited by him, no research neglected, toil and labour are unheeded, difficulty and danger unregarded. He stands upon the summit of the lofty pyramid, where forty centuries ago the last stone of that artificial mountain was laid, and as he surveys the wide-spread prospect at his feet, he reflects on the pride of the monarch who erected the colossal structure, on the slavery of the people whose labour was devoted to his haughty will. He stands on the heath of his native country, and as he gazes on the altar once stained with the innocent blood of human victims, and sighs when he thinks of the darkness in which his ancestors lived, he is thankful for the superior light in which he dwells. These remarks, dictated it may be by enthusiasm, will serve to shew what an inexhaustible field of delight is open to him who makes antiquities his study; that it is not a dry, unprofitable pursuit as stigmatised by some, whose opinion we must regard more in sorrow than in anger, but he will see even in this country alone, in every spot where he plants his foot, something to interest, something to awaken his attention, whether it be the beautiful village church with its ivy-covered walls, its rustic porch, its low square tower, or ascending spire, or the more gorgeous cathedral, or the more stately castle, or the rude cromlech or colossal pillar of Druidical times.

The course pursued in the following lectures will be an endeavour to trace this science from its earliest stage, taking us back nearly to the Creation, and as the field of inquiry is extensive, carrying us in its progress from

—“the far Nile's enormous model,”

to the

“Temples where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave,”

until we come

“To the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault.”

We will divide the subject into the following sections:

1. An account of the antediluvian and post-diluvian monuments recorded in Scripture, with a digression to the existing remains in various countries of a similar nature.
2. On the architecture of Egypt and of the once powerful monarchies of Asia, the Babylonian, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Median and Syrian, and also the architecture of India.
3. On Grecian architecture.
4. On Roman architecture and that which was founded on it, the Italian style.
5. On Gothic architecture.

LECTURE I.

The earliest authentic history of the world is, of course, to be found in the Bible, and as the part of the world in which the scenes were laid connected with the remotest period was Asia, to that quarter we will direct our attention first, and in the only books whose records are to be depended upon, we shall find an account of the germ of those cities which afterwards arose into such amazing splendour, but whose ruins at the present day afford only a melancholy picture of desolation, and a striking fulfilment of the terrible denunciations of God's wrath, uttered against them when their power was at its height, and when their duration was to be apparently eternal. Of some of the cities mentioned in Scripture no traces whatever are left behind; they are buried (excepting their names) as completely in oblivion as are those guilty cities of the plain which lie bound in their eternal sleep beneath the sullen and bitter waters of that lake (Asphaltites) which is at once their tomb and the awful testimony to their punishment. The erecting of altars is nearly the first circumstance recorded in Scripture which is connected with our subject, and although Noah is the earliest who is mentioned as having raised one (Genesis viii. 20), yet as sacrifices were offered before the flood, witness those of Cain and Abel (Gen. iv. 3, 4), it is the opinion of Bishop Kidder and other divines, that they also had altars whereon to lay their offerings, and that wherever sacrifices are spoken of, altars are necessarily implied. In the 4th chapter of Genesis, verse 17, Cain is said to have built a city which he called “after the name of his son Enoch;” this, which is the first recorded dwelling of man, we may look upon as nothing more than a residence for his own family. The account in Josephus is (Antiqui-

ties, Book I. chap. 2, s. 2) that Cain “first of all set boundaries about lands, he built a city and fortified it with walls, and he compelled his family to come together to it.”

Though the race of man must have multiplied in a very rapid manner before the Deluge, we find no further record of cities or human habitations, with the exception of a reference to dwelling in tents (Gen. ix. 20). It has been imagined that the construction of the Ark, that mysterious and solemn link between two worlds, evinced a considerable advance in the arts before the Flood, but whatever may have been the state of science or of art in the antediluvian world, all traces have been swept away in the common destruction which involved alike the contriver and the work of his hands. Josephus states (Antiq. B. I. ch. 11, s. 3) that the sons of Seth erected two pillars, one of stone, and another of brick, on which they inscribed their discoveries in astronomy, in the hope that one at least would be spared in the Deluge.

It is natural to suppose that man's first care in the early periods of the world was directed, if he did not find, to contrive some shelter against the inclemencies of the weather, and these habitations have been divided, with a fair show of reason, into three classes, according with the habits of the first dwellers on the earth, who may be also considered as forming only three great divisions, viz. 1. hunters; 2. shepherds; and 3. tillers of the ground. The first would not require a fixed residence, but would seek shelter in caverns, “clefts of the rocks,” (Jeremiah xlii. 16), or else in natural and artificial hollows, wherever their game abounded; and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that Egyptian architecture owes its origin to an imitation of these primitive grotto-like structures, to which, in their colossal and massive construction, they bear so much resemblance.

The dwellings of the second class, that of shepherds, would be obviously the tent; thus it is mentioned of Jabal, that “he is the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.” (Gen. iv. 20.) The architecture of the Chinese was, no doubt, derived from this source. The third class, the tiller of the ground, would require some shelter for his stores and provisions, as well as a fixed abode for his family, and therefore would be led to construct habitations from the readiest materials, which, in most countries, would be timber; thence arose the cabin formed from trees, the prototype, it has been considered, of Grecian architecture. Man's first efforts were doubtless of a rude and temporary nature, merely sufficing for the most inartificial wants. Some of the splendid trees of Asiatic countries would furnish the materials for building entirely and rapidly habitations of this kind, as at the present day in India, cottages are constructed from the palm, whose ample leaves serve for doors, roofs, and walls, as its branches are used for rafters and other timbers. Thus the mere art of building would arise from man's necessity, but his first attempts at any thing like architecture were decidedly the results of piety, manifested in erecting structures for religious purposes, or as memorials of affection for the departed dead. And herein is apparent the triumph of piety over selfishness, for whilst there are remains of temples and tombs whose origin is lost in the remotest times, there are none whatever to be traced of domestic architecture coeval with them. Everywhere are the last resting-places of the dead to be found, and everywhere does an inviolable sacredness attach to them. The Red Indian will even now track his unerring way through the pathless woods, and across the wide and rapid rivers of America, to the distant sepulchre of his tribe, and the pilgrimages which formerly more frequently occurred in Europe, and are at this day still undertaken in Asia, attest the strong veneration with which the burial-places of the illustrious dead are regarded. In Palestine, at the present time, places are pointed out to the traveller which tradition has assigned as the tombs of some of the prophets or holy men recorded in Scripture, and which are regarded with reverence alike by the Christian, the Jew, and the Mussulman. One instance in particular may be cited, viz. the sepulchre of Abraham, where a church was built by Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, over the cave of Machpelah. This was turned into a mosque by the Turks, and it is now (with Mecca, Jerusalem, and Medina,) one of the four chief places of pilgrimage to which the Molems resort, and it is hardly necessary to add that the descendants of the patriarch have always beheld his tomb with profound respect.

A celebrated name in Scripture is that of “the mighty hunter before the Lord,” Nimrod, the first recorded monarch, and in Genesis x. 10, it is stated that “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech, and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.” The most noted of these cities was Babel which, under the name of Babylon, became so powerful, and whose fall was so extraordinary. We shall in the next lecture compare the